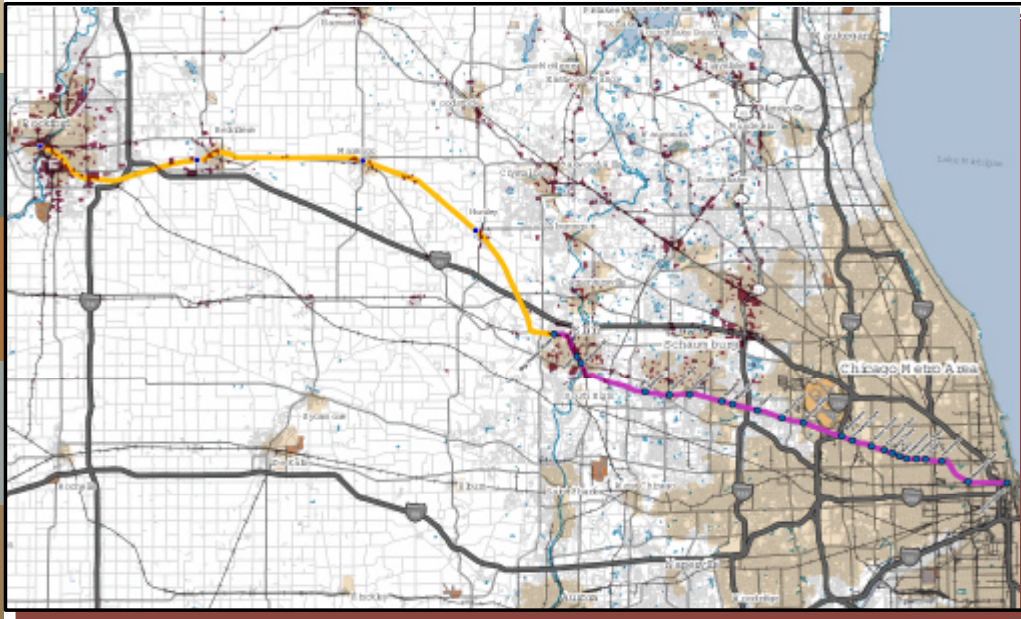


# Feasibility Study for the Belvidere / Rockford Commuter Rail Service



## FINDINGS and NEXT STEPS

January 12, 2005



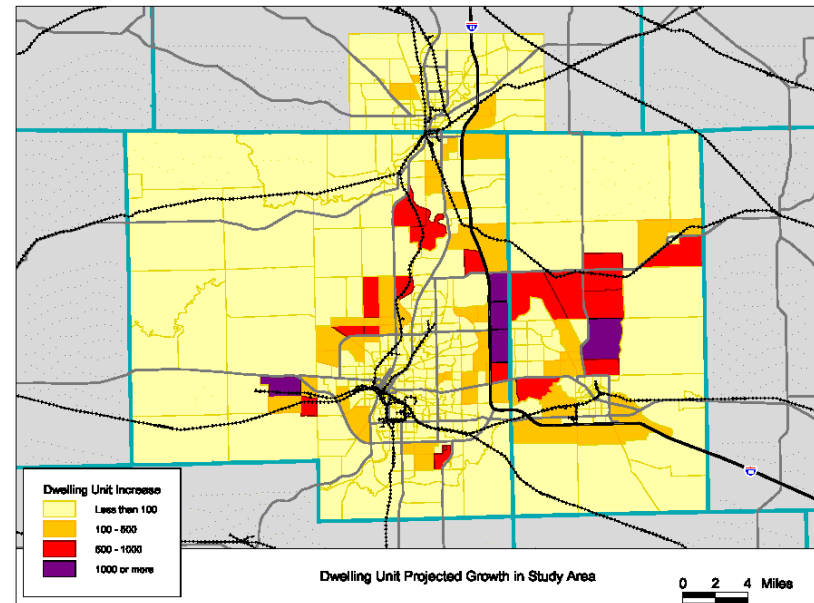
# Overview

- Describe Feasibility Study Findings
- Discuss Possible Future Actions



## Background

- Projected Growth in Boone / Winnebago County
- Coordinated Efforts by Local Communities
- Development of Growth Vision for the Area
- Decision to Undertake a Commuter Rail Feasibility Study



## Study Objectives

- Feasibility Study
  - Identify the *possible* solutions
  - Enough detail to understand implications
- Project Components
  - Railroad Operations & Coordination
  - Potential Infrastructure Improvements
  - Environmental Issues
  - Ridership Forecasting & Cost Estimates
  - Potential Funding Sources
  - Conclusions & Next Steps





## Project Approach

- First Phase FTA “New Starts” Programs
- Use Experienced Study Team
  - Railroad Engineers and Operations Staff
  - Transit Planners and Ridership Specialists
  - Certified Environmental Professionals
  - Experienced Highway & Traffic Engineers
- Data Collection & Analysis
- NICRI & Agency Coordination
- Issue Iteration & Resolution
- Quality Control & Conclusions





# Infrastructure Requirements



**Sidings & Signal Improvements**



**Bridges and Viaduct Repairs**



**Stations: Rockford, East Rockford,  
Tollway Station Point, Belvidere**



**Layover Yard**

## Train Operations

- Compatible Railroad Line
- Blended Passenger Operation Options
  - Extension of Existing Metra Service
  - Express Service Over Milwaukee West District
  - Shuttle Service to the End of Metra Service
- Multiple Potential Operators
- Various Forms of Contracts





## Rolling Stock Options



Metra "Gallery" Cars



Metra Locomotives



Diesel Multiple Unit (Self Propelled) Car

## Travel Markets Evaluated

- Traditional Commuter Market
- Suburban Commuter Market
- Reverse Commute Market
- Intercity Travel Market
- Recreational Travel Market
- Local / Community Lifeline Market
- Tollway Station Point Intercept Market
- Airport Access
  - O'Hare
  - Rockford



## Ridership Findings

- Typical of Other Long Distance Commute Lines
- Significant Growth Potential
- Many Types of Markets to Tap
- Estimated 222,000 Annual Riders





## Project Funding

- Anticipated Annual Revenue - \$1.6 million
- Anticipated Annual Expenses - \$3.3 million
- Typical Commuter Rail Cost Recovery - 50%
- Estimated Capital Costs - \$88.9 million
- Typical FTA "New Starts" Capital Share – 50%
- Proceeds from a Potential ¼% Sales Tax in Service Area - \$6.5 million per year
- Other Funding Sources



## What Next?

- To seek Federal Funding
  - Need to complete an Alternatives Analysis (AA)
  - AA is a standard process for all projects seeking New Starts funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Resolve some key institutional issues – identify a sponsor
- Political support critical
  - Many projects are 'earmarked'



## Institutional Issues

- Seek Inclusion in RTA?
  - Could Require a County Sales Tax
  - Access to Bonding Authority
- Metra as the Service Provider
  - Sales Tax Formula Entitlement
- Establish transit authority



## New Start – Key Criteria

- Finance
  - Stable and dependable local and state financing plan
- Land Use
  - Dense existing uses and/or commitment to transit supportive plans and policies
- Cost Effectiveness
  - Incremental cost / hr of system user benefit
  - a.k.a. cost per rider must be low



## Alternatives Analysis Must Seek

- Locally Preferred Alternative that maximizes New Start ratings
  - Good ridership numbers
  - Low costs
  - Strong land use plan
  - Strong local support
    - ◆ Financial
    - ◆ Political



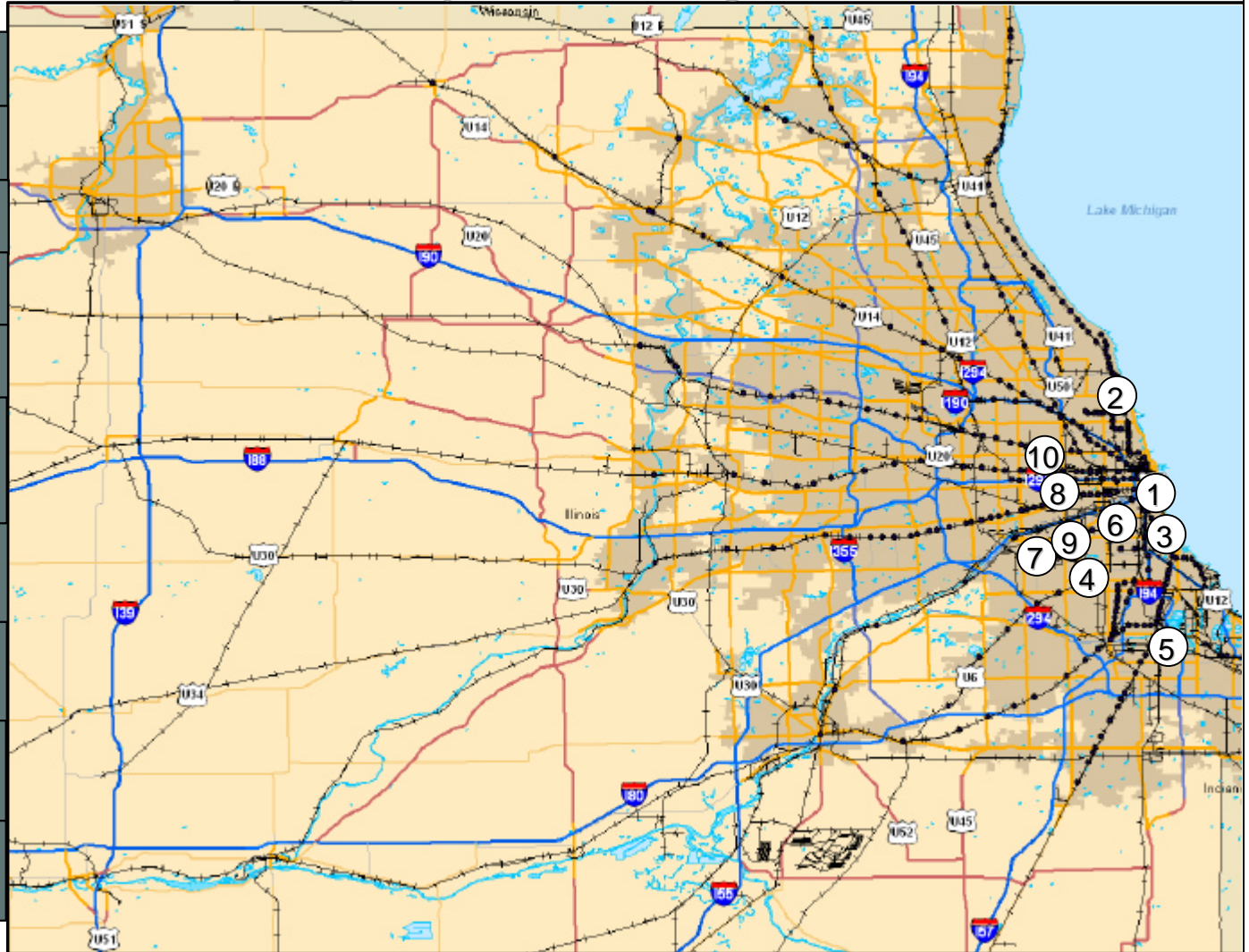
## New Starts Funding

- Highly Competitive Nationally and in Illinois
  - 59 active projects in design nationally, 120 on the radar
  - 6 active projects in Illinois, 22 on the radar
- Multiple Funding Sources Needed
  - Federal
  - State
  - Regional
  - Local



# New Start Competing Projects in Chicago Area – CTA

- |   |
|---|
| <b>1. Brown Line*</b><br><i>Service Enhancement</i>   |
| <b>2. Yellow Line</b><br><i>Extension to Old Orchard</i>  |
| <b>3. Blue Line</b><br><i>New Clinton St Loop</i>   |
| <b>4. Orange Line</b><br><i>Extend to Ford City</i>   |
| <b>5. Red Line</b><br><i>Extend to 130<sup>th</sup> St.</i>                                       |
| <b>6. Circle Line</b><br><i>Circumferential connecting CTA &amp; Metra along Ashland Corridor</i> |
| <b>7. Mid City Transitway</b><br><i>New Corridor – LaGrange / Cicero to Loop</i>                  |
| <b>8. O'Hare Express</b><br><i>New Express Service O'Hare to Downtown</i>                         |
| <b>9. Midway Express</b><br><i>New Express Service Midway to Downtown</i>                         |
| <b>10. Blue Line*</b><br><i>Douglas Branch Rehabilitation</i>                                     |



\* Indicates projects that have received Full Funding Grant Agreements with FTA



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## New Start Funding

- \$1.3 billion Nationally in FY 2004
- Discretionary Nature
- Congressional Preemption
  - Appropriation Committees Fully Earmark
  - Highly Competitive Process
  - Mandates at least 40% match though 20% is the authorized minimum
  - Influenced by the FTA Evaluation of AA
    - ◆ Can help make case - or -
    - ◆ Can be used against the project



# State and Local Funding

- State
  - Funding from SCIP and B Bonds committed
  - Need a new state initiative that includes funding for statewide rail expansion
- Local
  - A strong local funding commitment could give the project priority over other projects
  - Many options to consider / study
    - ◆ County or Municipal General Revenue
    - ◆ Mass Transit District
    - ◆ Parking Revenue
    - ◆ Station Concession Fees
    - ◆ Joint Development
    - ◆ Tax Increment Financing
    - ◆ Federal STP Funds
    - ◆ Other Federal or State Funds
    - ◆ Public Contributions



## Summary

- Project is Feasible and Has Potential to Become an Effective and Successful Service to Area
  - Community Support
  - Cost Effective
  - Operationally Acceptable
  - Minimal Capital Needs
  - Guide Development

